

PARSIPPANY-TROY HILLS TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



April 2023

APRIL DIVERSITY DATES

April 2: World Autism Awareness Day and Palm Sunday

April 5 to April 13: Passover, a major Jewish festival that celebrates the freeing of the Israeli slaves.

April 6: Theravada New Year is observed three days after the first full moon appears in April. This day marks Buddha's birth, death, enlightenment, and the start of the rainy season.

April 9: Easter Sunday

April 14: Day of Silence in which some students take a day-long vow of silence to protest the actual silencing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and their straight allies due to bias and harassment.

Also, Vaisakhi, a Sikh holiday marking the first day of the month of Vaisakh to celebrate spring harvest.

April 17: Yom HaShoah, also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day. Also Laylat-al-Qadr, the Night of Power, and considered to be the Islamic calendar's Holiest eve.

April 21: Eid Al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting.

April 22: Earth Day



BEST PRACTICES IN BALANCED LITERACY

The field of literacy instruction is always evolving. Some of us remember the SRA kits of the 60's and 70's that moved readers through progressively more challenging text using controlled language stories, culminating in multiple choice questions to determine comprehension levels. The 1980's brought the "whole language" movement with rich exposure to stories and novels.

The Balanced Literacy practices that grew out of those years are supported by research as providing students with necessary exposure to instruction in phonics, word study, reading, and writing.

In a balanced literacy framework, students see reading and writing modeled, share in reading and writing with the teacher, are coached, practice independently, and are actively engaged in word study. **Essentially, students read, write, and work with words daily.** These overarching components are the essence of balanced literacy and the best way to ensure that educators are meeting the needs of our diverse learners.

Reading instruction occurs daily. Students have opportunities to put their eyes on print as often as possible across their school day. This occurs through guided reading in the younger grades and book club groups in upper grades. Students also have time to read on their own and with buddies. Rich and diverse classroom and school libraries support this important learning. It is through daily reading that fluency and comprehension are strengthened.

Writing instruction occurs daily. Through explicitly modeled writing, shared writing, guided writing, and response to reading, students have many opportunities to build writing stamina and strengthen their command of sentence structure, story structure, essay development, and research writing.

Word study occurs daily. Whether working with letter sounds or tackling multisyllabic words, words are all around our students. Teachers ensure targeted practice opportunities for every student. Time each day is dedicated to foundational skills instruction and word study, and includes targeted small group instruction, literacy centers or partner work, and transition activities. The scientific consensus is that teaching phonics systematically, explicitly, and cumulatively is key to successful reading instruction—and we do this.

Beyond this rich general education literacy instruction, each elementary and middle school has a certified Reading Specialist to provide intensive instruction and Special Education teachers who, through Individualized Education Plans, support learners with special modifications and accommodations.

We are proud of the high quality of literacy instruction in Parsippány-Troy Hills Township Schools. From rich classroom libraries to smart professional development, we are constantly seeking the newest and best practices to develop students into confident and strong readers and writers.

Thank you to Supervisor Merisa Rosa for contributing to this article.

STUDENTS FROM DEIB COMMITTEE VISIT ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Student members of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee visited Lake Hiawatha and Intervale Schools to read aloud children's books featuring characters of diverse backgrounds and abilities. The high and elementary school students absolutely loved it and many teachers asked if the high school students could come back and read to the kids again. These visits support the district's Strategic Plan: Members of our learning community will receive support for social and emotional awareness and mental and physical health in order to flourish, demonstrate empathy, and celebrate the diversity of all.



LGBTQ Students: Where do they feel safest?

LGBTQ students feel safer at school than at home, with more than half calling their school an affirming space, according to a new national survey that covered all 50 states.

Students felt safest at school in Delaware, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, and New Mexico. In New Jersey, 52% of students said school was a safe place, compared with 29% who said that home was a safe place.

When students are mistreated or marginalized, they are at higher risk for mental health issues. When students feel safe in their schools and homes, they are also in a healthier place emotionally and mentally.

District Administration, March/April 2023

AUTHOR OF CRAZY-STRESSED SPEAKS TO PARSIPPANY PARENTS AND STAFF

Dr. Michael Bradley, renowned teen psychologist and author of several best-selling books on raising teenagers, spoke with Parsippany parents and staff during the district's recent Professional Development Day. Dr. Bradley emphasized these points:

- ◆ Resilience is emotional self-defense for children and teens.
- ◆ The goal for students isn't zero stress, it's finding the 'sweet spot' of stress.
- ◆ Read the data on marijuana and addiction. It's worse than you think.

ATTENTION!

Grade 4 students can see America's natural wonders and historic sites for free. Go to:
<https://www.everykidoutdoors.gov/index.htm>

